

Mitchell (T.D.)

THE

PAINS AND PLEASURES

OF A

MEDICAL LIFE;

BEING

AN INTRODUCTORY TO A COURSE OF LECTURES ON MATERIA MEDICA  
AND THERAPEUTICS:

(SESSION 1839-40,)

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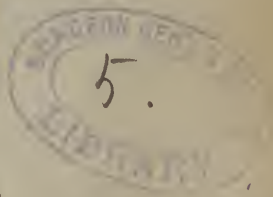
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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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MEDICAL HALL, NOVEMBER 11th, 1839.

Professor THOS. D. MITCHELL:

SIR—We, the undersigned, having been appointed a Committee on behalf of the Medical Class of Transylvania University, do respectfully request for publication, a copy of your eloquent and interesting Address, delivered on Thursday last.

Yours, with all due respect,

JAS. G. A. O'NEALE, }  
M. T. ATKINSON,        } *Committee.*  
R. P. HUNT,             }

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To Messrs. JAS. G. A. O'NEALE, }  
M. T. ATKINSON,                } *Committee, &c.*  
R. P. HUNT,                    }

GENTLEMEN—Your polite note of the 11th instant, requesting, in behalf of the Medical Class, a copy of my Introductory Lecture for publication, has been received. In reply, I have only to say, that if its appearance in a more permanent shape, will afford any gratification to the gentlemen whom you represent, you may consider it entirely at your service.

Very respectfully, &c.

THOS. D. MITCHELL.

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, Nov. 12th, 1839



THE  
PAINS AND PLEASURES  
OF A  
MEDICAL LIFE.

OF the multiplied sources of human happiness kindly provided by the munificence of Deity, none is more exuberant or gratifying than Contrast. To be compelled to gaze, incessantly, on the un-mixed beauties of nature or art, would be to sicken us with delight; while the perpetual grating on the ear, of the groans of the dying, and the terrible convulsions of nature, as they are developed in the earthquake, would cover us with wretchedness, too intolerable for endurance. We live and move, under the influence of contrast, and cannot be happy in any other condition, at least, in this world. What, I ask, induces so many young gentlemen to forsake their happy homes, and pleasant companions, for months, and to associate with strangers, in a distant land? Could this sacrifice be tolerated always? and is it not now endured, chiefly, on account of the benefits expected as the result? At this very moment, imagination may be active in placing before your vision, the termination of your career of pupilage, and your enjoyment of the richest rewards. You feel that you are not forever to be tyros in the profession, and with fancy's grasp some of you even now, seize the distant day that is to elevate you to the post of teacher in a school of medicine; and the contrast, as it rises and amplifies its dimensions and importance, fires you with zeal and nerves you with perseverance.

My object, gentlemen, in this discourse, is to delineate, as faithfully as I can, in consistence with brevity, *the Pains and Pleasures of a Medical life*. That the discouragements of the dark side of the

picture may not diminish your ardor, it will be my aim, so to touch the brighter scenes, as to increase your admiration of the landscape, when you gaze upon it, as a finished whole. Some there are, who think of the profession of medicine, only, as a repetition of delights, a succession of enjoyments; but these are dreamers of the night. There are pleasures, in all professional pursuits; and none more exhilarating than those that flow from the honest and successful discharge of a physician's duty. But there are vexations of spirit, and bodily suffering too, that, not unfrequently mar the happiness, that to another's eye, may seem to be pure and perennial.

Of the PAINS, incident to a medical life, allow me to name, as entitled to a prominent place, *the difficulties encountered by some pupils, in the course of study.* These may arise, partly, from a defect in early education, and, partly, from a want of pecuniary means; and the embarrassment is always augmented, by a consciousness of ignorance, or a sense of dependance on others, or by both. When, as alas too often happens, a young man of very feeble intellect, and of exceedingly slender attainments in literature, enters upon medical study, he feels not how defective he is, and, of course, realises not the difficulties that cluster around him. Such persons are apt to entertain highly favorable notions of their own competency; or at all events, they have convinced themselves, by what process I know not, that any sort of material can be worked up into a *Doctor*, and that, therefore, they need not despair.

Others there are, whose native powers are gigantic, who though badly educated, have become enamored of medicine, and are devoted to its study. And, however industrious they may be, at every step they meet with some appalling hindrance, that for the time, greatly damps their zeal. Such individuals are often under the necessity of protracting their studies, much beyond the limit prescribed in their first calculations, by reason of poverty. The man, whose means are scanty, though his mind may be naturally of a high order, is thus compelled to be in the rear of the drone in science, whose pockets, it may be, are better stored than his head. This is a source of keen mortification, for which there is no remedy, but patience and perseverance.

The medical student who has a mind that is susceptible of high improvement, and whose early education has been neglected, may

expect to realise pleasure, even in the midst of the perplexities that beset him. Conscious of his deficiencies, and resolved to master every obstacle, he is constantly gaining ground; and the acquisitions of to-day, are mingled with gratification, that more than outweighs the despondency associated with the defects of yesterday. He feels the true value of what is gained, because he knows what it cost him. Such men there are, such there have always been, and such will there be, to the end of time. The difficulties of early life fitted them to endure the trials of the profession, and to honor it by their zealous efforts in its behalf. *Omnia vincit labor*, was their motto, under every variety of discouragement, and it gave them the victory.

But, it has happened, that pecuniary wants have greatly embarrassed the studies of young men, whose native talent and educational advantages were of a superior grade. Eager to advance as rapidly as any others, their laudable zeal has been checked by the force of dire necessity. Sometimes, after having attended a course of lectures, their studies have been interrupted for one or more years, by the laborious occupation of the school-master, in order to gain sufficient means to complete their medical education. In this painful interval, their acquired stock of information is, at best, *in statu quo*, and all that has been learned, must be studied over again. To one whose ambition is not easily subdued, this drawback on future prospects, is a source of unspeakable mortification. He cannot, or does not realise, that all is for the best, and that the perplexing delay is probably to be the means of his more certain and honorable elevation. Unfortunately, with the bias too common to youth, he looks at the present only, and his discouragements well nigh force him to a perpetual abandonment of a pursuit that is dear to his heart. His spirit falters and hesitates, and he mourns in secret over the haplessness of his destiny.

It may be the good fortune of the pupil, to escape all the quicksands and shoals, at which we have hinted; and yet he may realise unutterable anxiety, ere he makes his actual debut on the theatre of professional life. Some men, encumbered, doubtless, with a morbid sensibility, have been wrought up by their imaginative powers to such a state, as to be actually miserable, in the near approach of the green-box examination. And I suppose there are



some now in my hearing, who entertain a most alarming apprehension of the fancied reality of that untried ordeal. This weakness, for such it may be called, although witnessed in the most talented members of a class, suffices to give constant pain and uneasiness to the subject of it. One of the best qualified young men I ever examined, was so greatly distressed from this cause, that he burst into tears the moment he was ushered into the presence of the faculty, and was unable for several minutes, to command his feelings. In the judgment of many, no trials can be more painful, than those of a candidate under examination; and hence the erroneous conclusion, that the procurement of a Diploma is the most difficult thing in his whole career, and that to surmount this obstacle, is, in effect, to dissipate all others. But, alas! the duration of this reverie is short. The man presently awakes from his dream, and new difficulties meet him on every side.

This leads us to consider, as the second source of the pains of a medical life, *some of the obstructions in the way of obtaining business.*

Some there are, into whose lap fortune has showered an abundance of this world's goods, and who are thus saved from many of the trials, that befall the more indigent members of the profession. I do not affirm that this seeming advantage, is in reality upon the whole, very desirable. If it be a source of blessing in some cases, most unquestionably it does not always so operate. For the most part, however, young graduates are in straitened circumstances, and need all the patronage that can be procured. Not unfrequently too, they commit the sad mistake of forming an acquaintance that is too extensive and too fashionable for their best interests. They are thence led to acquire extravagant notions of dress and living, and to study less, and to be more frequently absent from their offices, on calls of politeness, than propriety warrants. These habits are very apt to acquire strength faster than the subject of them is aware, but not without being watched by the discerning and prudent. Instead of living within their resources, they soon discover themselves to be deeply in debt, and the next step is to change their location, or perhaps to be anticipated in that by the seizure of their books and instruments, to satisfy the claims of impatient creditors.

Many a young man, however, who has been exceedingly prudent



in his associations and expenditures, has experienced much embarrassment and realised many painful emotions, in his efforts to obtain a livelihood by his profession. He is compelled, by a regard to public sentiment, to present a good exterior, and this cannot be accomplished by all men with the same slender resources, in the same happy manner. Some will appear genteel and neat, at a cost that would but little improve the person of another. And besides all this, it is desirable for a single man to have the reputation of boarding at a good and respectable establishment, since even this may influence his success, in no small degree. But it has often happened, that young physicians have not been able to make a regular provision for boarding any where, and although exceedingly neat and even fashionable in their attire, have been compelled, occasionally, to *spunge*, (as it is called,) on this and the other acquaintance, and to get additional meals, just as the cash was forthcoming, or, to fast. You have no need to refer to the *Diary of an English Physician*, gentlemen, for facts to elucidate the point before us. I tell you, that one of the most eminent medical professors now living in America, and by many affirmed to be on the very top of the list, was, for years after his graduation, unable to be a regular inmate of any boarding house; but procured his meals when and where accident seemed to direct, though doubtless a wise Providence marked his course. His acknowledged talents and indomitable ambition kept him afloat in the ocean of difficulty, that has engulfed many of feeblér intellect and nerve, until the way for promotion was thrown open, and the crown of honorable distinction placed on his head.

If the remarks just submitted, be applicable to many young physicians who are unmarried, with what additional force do they press upon those, who, destitute of the funds called for by such a state, have unwittingly encircled themselves in the matrimonial chain? The sad result often proves to be, that two, in place of one, are made miserable, and the mistaken man, at his leisure, is compelled to repent the folly, that has given so much unhappiness to another, who fondly hoped for better days and more cheering scenes. I am well aware, that young physicians, have sometimes greatly extended their business, by a judicious nuptial enterprise; but such cases are "so few and so far between," that they rather

serve as monitors to deter the impetuosity of youth, than prompt, at all hazards, to make the venturous leap in the dark. It is as true now, as it was in ancient days, "that it is not good for man to be alone;" and I know that it is pre-eminently important for the medical practitioner, to have an affectionate, wise and prudent helpmate; nor could I bestow upon any pupil before me, if it were in my power, a greater earthly blessing. But if any act in a physician's history, imperiously calls for prudence and discretion, it is that which of all others, most tenderly and deeply implicates his own happiness, and not less hers, whose fortune he proposes to link with his own.

It is possible that some who hear me, and who are destined to settle in regions not yet under the full influence of civilization, may experience hardships, even greater than those to which I have adverted. Though in little danger of the red man's violence, your lot may be cast in a country, where it may be difficult to realise more than sufficient to meet the actual wants of life. A physician, born and educated in Paris, by name Regnier, bade adieu to the comforts and refinements of his native land, and located within ten miles of Marietta, on the Ohio river, about thirty-five years ago. The country was hilly and broken, and destitute of roads. Too poor to purchase a horse, the Doctor, blest with a bouyant spirit and an active frame, attended to a large business on foot, making journies of ten or fifteen miles with as much rapidity, as is usual on horseback, in rugged regions. This hard service was performed nearly two years, before he was able to procure a horse, without going in debt for it. He had a small family to support, and it was his delight to toil for their comfort. Some will be ready to exclaim, "miserable occupation—contemptible servitude!" "But," says the well known Dr. Hildreth, of Marietta, "I have often heard this physician say, in after and more prosperous days, that he looked back to the period referred to, as one of the happiest portions of his life." That this intelligent, popular, and successful physician, as the narrator declares him to have been, felt the days and nights of his poverty, to be a season of trial, none can doubt. But, that the discipline thus had in the school of adversity, laid the foundation of his subsequent distinction, is equally obvious; and the brief history is pregnant with valuable instruction to every student of medicine.

Allow me to notice, in the *third* place, as part and parcel of the pains of a medical life, *unkind treatment from professional brethren, and from patients*. Sincerely do I regret, that there has existed, or is now, such a state of things in our profession, as to call for the remarks about to be made. But alas! it seems that Doctors are men of like passions with other sons of Adam; and that they, too, often make displays of the worst traits that mar our depraved and erring nature. Indeed, it has become almost a proverb, that physicians cannot practice in the same neighborhood, and be on good terms with each other.

The disposition to do injustice to professional brethren, often has its origin, in a deep-wrought consciousness of their high superiority. The envious man cannot endure the prosperity of his neighbor, for selfishness is the mainspring of all he says or does. Is the success of another lauded throughout the village or the country, and does his business rapidly extend, on this account? Envy is supplied with new aliment, and its machinations are multiplied in order to effect the downfall of him, at whose head its venomous shafts are directed. Truth is distorted, until it bears the impress of falsehood, and fictions, artfully concocted, are disseminated for facts.

Many years ago, before the sulphate of quinine was introduced to the notice of physicians, arsenic, in various forms, was resorted to with great success, in the treatment of intermittents. I knew a stupid, less than half educated practitioner, who pursued the old fashioned bark practice, who got into a rage, at the comparatively rapid cures effected by the physicians around him. He read very little, and although he had heard of the remedial powers of arsenic, knew not how to employ it. Aware that it was held to be a poison, he availed himself of that property to injure his brethren; and actually had some success for a time, by the dexterous use of the scare-crow, *Poison, Poison!!*

One of the most reprehensible arts practised in our profession, is the unmanly trick of entering under cover of night, or with false pretences, in broad daylight, the chamber of a patient, under the care of another physician. By an artful misnomer, he converts his officiousness into a visit of friendship. Having learned that his good neighbor was sick and low-spirited, he comes to cheer him up, and while away a tedious hour. Such is the profession he

makes, but mark his cunning. He draws from the patient what suits his purpose; and by significant shrugs and sighs, and half uttered sentences, actually trenches on the confidence reposed in the medical attendant, until the sick man begins to doubt, whether his Doctor understands the nature of the case. These kind and friendly visits are reiterated, until the intruder fancies he has a claim on the patient, and actually succeeds in supplanting the object of his envy.

These, and many other stratagems, equally derogatory, are perpetually in operation, and serve to explain very satisfactorily, the want of friendly feeling and harmony, that salutes our ears from every quarter. And in adducing some of them, to illustrate the pains of a medical life, do not imagine, that I suppose the victims of such base devices are the only sufferers. That their spirits are often jaded and wounded, almost to the point of taking an everlasting farewell of the profession, is by no means, an unfrequent result. But, could you read the dark lines drawn deep as with the diamond, on the accusing conscience of the man, who thus sports with the sensibilities, the character, the happiness of his brethren, you would discover the hidden, but no less real truth,

“That he who gives a pang, himself ten pangs receives.”

The soul that is not hardened, until it has as little sensibility as the millstone, will have, (for heaven has so decreed,) moments of self-accusation and biting stings of remorse, keen enough to cause the miserable being to hate himself, and wish that he had never gazed upon the light of day. Ah! he too shall know and feel the pains of a medical life, and shall realise, that the bitterest ingredient is the fact, that they are self-inflicted.

The unkindness of patients to their physicians, is also a fruitful source of distress and embarrassment; and sometimes, has a poignancy blended with it, that can scarcely be endured. You may comprehend my meaning, when you hear an illustrious physician of America exclaim, “Oh the ingratitude of man! he sank by misfortune, from affluence to poverty, and I waited on his family in the years of their destitution, by night and by day. I sympathised with their sorrow-worn spirits, and poured, as I could, the oil of consolation into their bleeding hearts. My purse was open as my



heart, to assuage the anguish of their troubled breasts, and I was ready to make almost any sacrifice for their good. I knew that they could not recompense me, but I felt the unspeakable pleasure of befriending the forlorn. But judge of my astonishment, when, as if by magic, on a sudden turn of fortune's wheel, this very family rose again to affluence and splendor; and more bloated with pride than in the days of their original grandeur, they shunned the physician who alone had been a benefactor in the time of need, lest his presence, in their gilded halls, should call up, unseasonably, the recollection of the dismal scenes of penury, through which they had lately passed, cheered by the purest friendship, for which the only return was base ingratitude."

But physicians sometimes realise deep distress, in consequence of the deportment of families whose circumstances have always been good, and to whom the most faithful services have been rendered; and this too, without any sort of apology being offered, or an opportunity given for explanation. 'This wanton trifling with physicians, seems to arise from a capricious recklessness, which eludes, because it cannot bear, examination. Sometimes it is developed by the presentation of a just account, already too long neglected, and which, instead of being thus met, should have been paid promptly, at the first solicitation. If there be real or imaginary cause of complaint, candor and justice require, that the difficulty be stated frankly and fully. The physician may be able, in a single sentence, perhaps, to remove every particle of misapprehension; and he will rejoice to do so, if his demeanor be correct. If, instead of pursuing this honorable course, another medical adviser be sent for, at the next illness in the family, a positive wrong is perpetrated, a wound is inflicted without cause.

Having hinted at the *modus operandi* of a Doctor's bill, in certain cases, it may be proper to extend our views a little further. And here, let me say, that physicians experience not a little perplexity from their patrons, as the result of the too general indifference respecting compensation for services rendered. At the moment when danger appears to be great, some persons seem to value our services above all price, whose memories fail astonishingly, when the urgency of the case has passed by. The candidate for medical honors, and for practice may calculate on being roused from

his slumbers, with much greater violence and more impatient haste, by the man who never pays the Doctor, than by him, who is not only willing, but anxious to reward his toil. When I have been called to the chamber window, by the thundering peels at my knocker, in a dark and stormy night, when the elements seemed as if they had waged war with each other, and as though heaven and earth were about to come together, and a strange voice has proffered to give "any sum of money for a Doctor," although I have not refused to go, I have always made my calculations to draw a blank in such cases. Indeed, to decline a call of this kind, would most probably excite the clamors of many, against the physician, who never paid his bill, unless compelled by law.

And here, gentlemen, let me advise you to understand and appreciate your claims. Some men will treat your demand for payment, as though it were a favor to pay. Let them know and feel, that the favor lies on the other side. There are occasions, in which the physician renders services that money cannot compensate. He fixes a nominal value, to be sure, but that rarely meets the case; and unless kindness and good feeling make up the deficiency, he is not requited as he should be. I am proud to say, however, that the balance is, now and then, fully realised, in a sense of gratitude and confidence, that grows with years and strengthens with time, and is a prouder monument than was ever erected for the blood-stained hero.

Fourthly; the physician often experiences severe mental suffering, from the *sad consciousness of the imperfections of the science, or of his failure to give its principles the right application*. The most successful practitioner is not exempt from seasons of disappointment. Some unseen power lurking in the atmosphere or elsewhere, conspires, with more obvious causes, to augment the violence and obscurity of the morbid phenomena with which it is his province to contend. He calls to his aid the experience of by-gone years, and searches the records of modern times, to find, if possible, the secret of his present embarrassment. His patients fall on the right hand and on the left, with symptoms, not unlike those which have been subdued a hundred times, with ordinary efforts. Presently, he is at the couch of one, whose life is of unspeakable importance to his family, to numerous friends, and to a whole com-

munity. The anxious, settled gaze of relative and associate, as if resolved to drag from the bosom of the physician, his private opinion of the probable issue, meets him on every side. He presses the resources of his art to the utmost stretch of his ingenuity, but a secret conviction that all is in vain, mingles with every movement. Responsibility may be divided, it is true, and the ablest consulting aid back his own judgment; but alas! the heavy load rests on him. Ah! who can estimate the unuttered and unutterable sorrow, that overpowers the sensitive medical attendant, at such a crisis? He may enjoy the most unbounded confidence of the sick man, and all around; but he may have a painful misgiving that he has erred in judgment, and the sadness of his heart may for the time, render him miserable. In the most favored view of the case, he is compelled to witness the failure of his art to rescue from the grave, a life of inestimable value; and he sighs in secret, that he ever made physic the profession of his choice.

I know that a consciousness of rectitude, a deep sense of unflinching integrity of purpose, may sustain a man amidst the most appalling trials; yea, may steel him against despair, and cause the placid serenity of innocence, to play around his brow. And I know too, that there are Stoics in the profession, who are reputed to have lost an amount of sensibility which they never possessed. But tell me if you can, who, in the wide world, educated under the full blaze of civilization, could have been the medical attendant of Washington, in his last hours, and in the tremendous trust, felt no sadness of soul, no fears that his task was not rightly discharged, no anguish of spirit, lest some remedy might have been overlooked, whose proper application would have protracted the inestimable life of the Saviour of his country?

Where is the reader of the sacred page, who has not felt the manliness of his soul melting almost to tears, on perusing the brief history of the youth, who was "the only son of his mother, and she a widow"? Ah! the sublimity and the pathos of that inimitable story owe their transcendent beauty and power, to the sentiment of which we have been speaking. It was not merely, that the parent was a doating mother, and she in the loneliness of widowhood; but it was, that her *only* son, yea, perhaps, her only *child*, the *last* earthly prop on which her waning life reposed for happiness, had



been hidden from her sight in the darkness of the grave; it was this consideration that moved the compassion of omnipotence, and prompted the display of miraculous power.

It is, however, during the ravages of a desolating epidemic, that for the first time makes its appearance in our neighborhoods, that we realise most sensibly the imperfections of medicine, and are grieved beyond expression, at the feebleness of our most untiring exertions. How should these facts inspire the student with new ardor, to investigate the deepest recesses of our science, and to comprehend all that can be known, whose tendency is to keep at bay the active agents that wage war with human life. If the well instructed physician, who has hazarded his own comfort by the inhalations of the vapors of the midnight lamp, may be called to experience deep mental distress, because of the inefficacious application of the principles of medical philosophy, what may not he expect, who wastes the hours and months and years of pupilage, in frivolous amusement or wanton dissipation? If, in the course of trifling away precious time, he has succeeded in banishing the last particle of sensibility from his bosom, he may practice medicine, and never have his tranquility disturbed by a single pang. But, if a spark of the animating and endearing sympathies of his nature remain, his anguish will be the more intense, when he reflects on opportunities slighted and lost, seasons of instruction contemned or misimproved, the proper use of which would have qualified him, more perfectly, for professional usefulness.

It were easy, gentlemen, to swell the catalogue of causes, that conspire to give pain to the medical practitioner. I might place before you, in melancholy rank and file, the agencies that lurk within him, and whose pestiferous operation curses all his blessings. The vices that he alas! too frequently cherishes, not only stain his reputation in the eye of others, but mar his peace, plant daggers in his soul, blast his hopes for time, and cast a black shadow over his prospects for eternity. But, enough has been exhibited of the sombre hues of the picture, and I hasten from the dreariness of the scene, to gladden your vision, for a moment, with a gaze on the lovelier aspects of the landscape.

The practitioner of the healing art is not a stranger to pleasure. His joys are peculiar to his profession, and in many cases, far out-

weigh, and more than compensate for all the trials and anxieties that are incident to the imperfections of his vocation. The first source of pleasure we propose to notice is

**THE STUDY OF MEDICINE.** If there be those in our profession, who have no fondness for the practice of medicine, it is rare to come in contact with one, who has not realised much gratification in its study. When private reading is duly blended with public instruction, and the dry details of books are inspirited with the clear and ample demonstrations of the professor, the student is not only instructed, but highly delighted, as he progresses. Hence it is not an unfrequent occurrence, that young gentlemen in affluent circumstances, after having finished a regular collegiate course, devote themselves to medical reading, and attendance on medical lectures, and sometimes even seek the Doctorate, with no expectation of practising medicine. They regard this process, as tending to amplify their accomplishments, and, as well calculated, to subserve their interests in subsequent life.

Nor is it wonderful, that men of inquisitive mind, should feel strong desires to explore the secrets of nature, as they are developed in the various departments of our science. Here is a field, of amplest dimensions, a mine whose true value has never been fully ascertained, an inexhaustible treasure, a fountain, ever flowing, yet ever full.

To such of my hearers, as have just entered upon medical studies, and have been somewhat dismayed by the seeming barbarism of its nomenclature, I may affirm with confidence, that this is the most rugged and thorny spot in the road. This is especially the fact, in respect of all who are strangers to the etymology of the terms, which, for the most part, owe their significancy to a dead language. Having mastered this difficulty, you may calculate on accumulating pleasures, as you steadily and perseveringly advance.

But the study of medicine is also a source of pleasure to the indefatigable practitioner, whose experience daily convinces him that the science is yet very imperfect. He devotes many an hour, that others would not scruple to waste in frivolous sport, in zealous efforts to rescue the art of healing from the charge of uncertainty. It was this spirit, that prompted the illustrious Rush to say, "that a physician should be a student to the end of his life." And it was

the same sentiment, deeply graven on the heart of Sydenham, that gave utterance to that magnanimous declaration, "I had rather be the discoverer of a certain remedy for the most trifling disease, than to amass the largest fortune." Such manifestations of the high gratification associated with and growing out of medical study, are to be found in all our most valued works. If the facts be, as we have affirmed them to be, then the pleasures of your pupilage, gentlemen, are to be measured by the ardor and constancy of your devotion to study. And if the circumstances of any who hear me, be of such a nature, as to expose them to some of the *pains* we have delineated, let the account be more than balanced, by the almost incessant gratification, which your own efforts may infallibly secure.

Though we are not ignorant, that some men practice physic, not from love to the occupation, but rather from necessity, still it is true, that many realise great pleasure, even in the drudgery of the profession. I have known those who affirmed, that they never felt so happy, as when fully occupied with professional duties. This is explicable, on the ground, that a spirit of investigation is self-expansive, grows by its native elasticity, and finds new sources of enjoyment, in every attempt to scan the phenomena of Nature, both in health and disease. Some minds there are, that would collapse, and sink into comparative nothingness, unless stimulated incessantly by new objects of pursuit. And such is the nature of disease, that a man habituated to patient research, will discover something wearing the aspect of novelty, wherever he goes. If he be an independent thinker, untrammelled by the dogmas of the schools, regardless of any man's opinions, further than they are coincident with truth, he will examine nature with his own dissecting knife, and scrutinize morbid phenomena, just as though he alone were in quest of knowledge. This is the system-levelling spirit, that goes ahead in the great highway of investigation, unrestrained by the phantasies of theory, and the hair splitting distinctions of the medical sophist.

As evidence of the high gratification derived by many physicians from the practice of medicine, allow me to adduce the fact, that they almost never permit an opportunity to escape, of making an autopsic examination, although this task is regarded by some, with

disgust, and hence studiously shunned. It is the fond hope, that some faint glimmering of light may dawn upon the obscurity of the case, that urges the scalpel, as it wends its way through the various tissues of the body. And it matters not, for the time being, whether the discovery be real or fictitious, true or false, so far as the pleasure of the student is concerned. The raptures of Broussais were not less transporting, at the time when first he dreamed that he had immortalised his name by a deathless discovery, from the fact, that subsequent investigation was destined to raze his fabric to the dust. The enthusiasm of Archimedes when he leaped from the bath, frantic with joy, terrifying the spectators with the exclamation, "I have found it, I have found it," would have lost none of its thrilling influence on his own soul, if the doctrine of specific gravity had been blotted from the earth in the next century.

The practice of medicine, rightly understood, is the proper adaptation of mind to rectify the disorders of our nature; and what source is more prolific of pleasure, than the felicitous application of mental effort to cure the evils that may be remedied, and to mitigate the woes that cannot be cured? The practitioner, whose labors are almost uniformly successful, cannot be unhappy, unless he resolves to be so. He plans and executes, and is rarely disappointed. The love and esteem of thousands cluster around his path, and the blessings of many that were ready to perish, rest upon his head.

Not a small portion of the pleasures of a medical life is attributable to the tendency of the science of medicine to expand the mind, to liberalize the general views, and thus to fit the individual for greater usefulness. The broad field of investigation, thrown open to him who embarks in medical studies, with a desire to have his mind richly stored, presents a most certain antidote to the narrow and contracted spirit, that well befits the cloister. Armed with the inductive philosophy as a panoply against the fine spun systems of the speculative and visionary theorist, he lays, broad and deep, the foundation of all his acquisitions, and is charmed with every thing, that having truth for its basis, is but nature speaking in the works of art.

The well instructed physician is prepared to participate in all

the liberal enterprises of society; and in the participation, he realizes not a little enjoyment. Hence we learn the reasons that operated to give such prominence, in the benevolent and literary institutions of the day, to Rush and Wistar and other celebrated American physicians. Their views and feelings could not be confined within the limits of their lecture halls and private offices. They studied human nature in its broadest aspect, and laid under contribution every thing around them, in order to amass the greatest practicable amount of intelligence.

It has been sometimes charged upon our profession, that all its apparently disinterested benevolence flowed from the spirit of avarice; and in proof, our attention has been called to the rare instances, in which physicians have bequeathed large estates to their families. But I need not detain you to demonstrate the utter falsity of the allegation. It will not be denied, that medical men have some considerable regard for money, and it is also conceded, that a goodly portion of the *sine qua non* comes into their possession; but it is equally notorious, that they evince an exceedingly small share of the cumulative faculty, and hence it is proverbial that Doctors are seldom rich. The honest truth in this matter is, that our profession is not only expected to render a very large amount of gratuitous service to the public, but that its liberality in this respect has been a theme of commendation in all ages. Making allowance, therefore, for all the selfishness and secret motives of an unworthy character that may sometimes operate, there are thousands on thousands of self-denying offices performed by physicians in all civilized lands, prompted by the purest benevolence, and the heartfelt pleasure that requites the truly generous. The liberalized physician is no stranger to the unsullied pleasure of doing good.

And think you, gentlemen, that in this inventory of the sources of pleasure, we mean to overlook the pure and exhilarating delight, that bursts upon the soul and covers it with ecstasy, when our efforts, blessed by Heaven, restore to friends and family, one who is endeared by every tie that binds kindred spirits together? Oh no! faithless should we prove to truth and to the dignity of our calling, if this resplendent gem were not permitted to shine out from the mass of crudities in which it lies embedded. Are there not some in my hearing, who have already seen the visions of by-gone years rise to



their view, to give life and vigor to the feint traces of reality to which I have referred, who can exclaim of a truth

“All which I saw, and part of it I was,”

and who feel that the happiness of being instrumental in snatching from the grave one estimable fellow being, is enough to counterbalance all the sorrows and perplexities that gather in the revolution of years? The affectionate wife has beheld, with untold agony, the last gasp of the partner of her bosom, and he has gone from her sight, notwithstanding the most untiring efforts of the medical attendant. Unsatisfied with one deadly thrust, the fatal epidemic strikes again, and yet once more, and the victims are borne to the narrow house in quick succession, till at length, like the forest tree, shattered by the fury of the tempest, a solitary branch remains to tell the heart-sticken widow, that she has not ceased to be a mother. But, even that branch, the last hope of her desolate heart, lies prostrate, speechless, almost within the icy embrace of the relentless tyrant, that spares not for tears, though they flow like rivers in their onward course. The frantic gaze of the bereft one, darting from the couch of the dying, to the countenance of the physician, has an eloquence in it of unutterable import. It seems to say, with imploring, yet despairing intensity of feeling, “spare, oh spare my only child, save me from going down, solitary and alone, in sorrow to the grave.” A new vigor is inspired by the touching and resistless appeal. The energies of the healing art are taxed afresh, its resources are developed and applied with augmented power; the dying man revives, the anxious parent weeps for joy, and cannot find language strong enough to pour out the overflowings of her soul in gratitude to him, who has been the honored instrument in effecting the happy result.

Where is the physician, who at such a juncture, would barter his profession for any occupation below the stars? Where the man, from whose memory the circumstances of such a scene could be effaced, while mind retained its powers; or who would not treasure up its minutest details, and call them from the storehouse of the past, to dwell upon the vision with new delight?

The only remaining source of pleasure which the limits of this discourse will permit me to name, is the high satisfaction attendant

on successful efforts to elevate the medical character. The well-educated and honorable practitioner is grieved at the defects, so long tolerated in the profession, especially as they relate to the preparatory instruction of candidates. He sickens at the recklessness with which so many are encouraged to shelter themselves under the broad wing of the healing art, as if it were designed by Heaven to be a house of refuge, a common receptacle for the lame, the halt and the blind of all occupations under the sun. But he rejoices that not a few worthies are added to the roll, from time to time, who have made their foundation sure, and have erected a superstructure that will do honor to their alma mater; and he hails them with joy, as co-workers in the noble effort of redeeming the profession from the degradation in which it has been sunk by ignorance and chicanery. It affords him unspeakable gratification to take by the hand every such youthful candidate for business, and to encourage him by his counsel, his friendship and his influence. He has not forgotten the perils of his own opening career, and he knows by experience the value of a medical friend and adviser, at such a crisis.

Is the character of a brother practitioner defamed without cause? he will not be a silent witness of the injustice that is meditated; but feeling for his injured reputation as he ought, will nobly defend his cause. He rejoices to rescue from unmerited odium, the humblest member of the profession, assured that the disgrace of one, is in some measure, the degradation of the whole fraternity. And while he pays a reasonable deference to the distinctions that unavoidably obtain, as the result of contingencies, he delights in making those his chief companions, who to their love of science and a regard for the honor of their profession, add the charms of a virtuous and consistent life. He feels the force of a resistless affinity for kindred spirits, for those who are identified in their sympathies with the great interests of humanity, and he prefers to rally under the outspread banner of the public good, rather than to fight beneath the narrow flag of party. With Sydenham, he embraces the whole family of man, in the grasp of his benevolence, and is proud to be one of a fraternity, whose province it is, "to soothe the troubled spirit, and give the sufferer rest."

Such, gentlemen, are some of the *pains* and *pleasures* of a medical life. I would that a master's pencil had sketched the scene,



and made the canvass speak, with all the pathos of living reality. Imperfect as it is, I submit it for your inspection, future meditation and practical improvement. May it be your happy portion, to reap rich harvests of pleasure, not only in the practice of the profession in after years, but in its study, now. To this end, make it your business, to place a due estimate on present advantages. Some take no note of time, but by its loss. Be it your ambition, to count every moment lost, that is not improved. Let each setting sun bear witness to the fidelity of your studies, and you will never regret, that you enrolled your names on the long catalogue of the pupils of TRANSYLVANIA.

## TO THE FRIENDS OF TRANSYLVANIA.

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It will gratify our numerous friends to hear, that amid the jars and convulsions of the schools, the Medical Department of Transylvania, relying on her own resources, is triumphantly maintaining her ground. Her new Hall, the most ample and splendid in America, (63 by 160 feet, and three stories high,) is now under cover, and will be fully completed by October first, 1840. A large quantity of the recent purchases of apparatus, preparations, books, &c. has arrived in safety, and the balance will be here by spring, at furthest. Our list of matriculants for the session of 1839-40, is now (Nov. 25th,) 230, and pupils are yet coming in. The Class, when complete, will be larger than it has been since the winter of 1833-7. The facilities for boarding students have increased, so that 300 could be accommodated with ease, and for the most part, at \$3.50 per week, fuel and light included; and even at a lower charge, a considerable number are now suited to their entire satisfaction. Anatomical material, in great abundance, is already in possession of the superintendant of that department, and there will be no lack in the supply throughout the session. It would afford us pleasure, to make an exhibition of our actual stock in the Dissecting rooms, to those who have slandered the school, in this particular. The Surgical advantages, always known to be equal to those of any school in America, have thus far greatly exceeded those of former sessions, several highly important operations having been already performed before the whole class. The list of graduates will number from seventy to eighty.

The printed Catalogue for	1836-7	numbered	242	pupils.
“ “ “ “	1837-8	“	227	“
“ “ “ “	1838-9	“	211	“
The number, thus early, for	1839-40	is	230	“

P. S.—Since the above was written, we learn, that two cases of *Stone*, and one of *Hydrocele* (for the radical cure by incision) will shortly be the subjects of operation, in presence of the class.